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The Cardinal Wright Mariological Award

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THE CARDINAL WRIGHT MARIOLOGICAL AWARD

Citation

The Mariological Society of America is privileged this year to award its highest honor, the Cardinal Wright Award, to an active member who has contributed in an outstanding way to the development of Marian doctrine and devotion, not only in North America but world-wide as well.

The recipient is Father Alfred Boeddeker, O.F.M. The list of accomplishments of this learnedly simple and outstandingly humble Franciscan would take pages even to catalog. Our citation must limit itself to a few high points, with special reference to the Holy Mother of God.

Fr. Boeddeker was born and baptized in San Francisco; his family moved across the bay after the earthquake and fire. He went to elementary school in Oakland, attended high school at the Franciscan minor seminary in Santa Barbara, and made his novitiate at St. Elizabeth's, Oakland. He returned to Santa Barbara for philosophy and theology and was ordained a priest June 11, 1927.

His first assignment, 1928-1930, near Santa Barbara, introduced him to Mexican laborers, on whose behalf he built a social hall, provided recreation for children and served also as hospital chaplain. From 1930 to 1933, he did graduate studies in Rome—Canon Law and theology, and from 1933 to 1948, he taught at the Santa Barbara theologate and served as dean of studies for his Franciscan province. Never a recluse in academe, he founded, in 1934, and directed centers for both girls and boys.

In 1948, he was sent back to school at the University of California for language studies—Chinese, Japanese and Rus-

sian—in preparation for starting a Catholic University in China (Hankow). When the Communist take-over blocked those plans, he was named pastor of St. Boniface, the German national parish in the heart of San Francisco, with parishioners from every segment of society and human need. The works of charity Fr. Alfred began at St. Boniface, most of which continue still, are almost beyond count; most famous is the Saint Anthony Dining Room, where up to two thousand people a day receive a nourishing sit-down meal, and which is funded totally by private contributions. Among his other deeds are the founding of the Madonna Residence for elderly ladies, St. Anthony Farms, and the Foreign Students Centre. He is co-founder of a congregation of Sisters in Mexico, and has been confessor and advisor to many groups of Sisters. In his own religious family he has held responsible offices, and he has served the archdiocese of San Francisco as dean and chairman of various projects.

Honored by the West German government for his work with refugees, Fr. Alfred, fluent speaker of German from childhood, has reached out to every national group, especially newcomers, using his linguistic talents and international experience. He has been proposed for the Nobel Peace Prize. Were a vote to be taken for the best-known citizen in San Francisco, Fr. Boeddeker would be a strong contender. Many honors have come his way, which he has taken as tributes to St. Francis: Knight of the Holy Sepulchre, Knight of Malta, honorary degrees from universities—a “doctor of public service” from the University of San Francisco.

With respect to his great friend—the Mother of God—Fr. Alfred has been equally energetic and apostolic. Indeed we might accommodate the axiom of the Latin poet to say that nothing that touches the honor of the Virgin Mary, in doctrine as in devotion, is alien to him. The Blessed Virgin is his mother and queen. He organized the National Marian Congress held on the West Coast in the Marian Year of 1954, and established that same year the Marian Centre and Library at St. Boniface on Golden Gate Avenue. He has

served for many years as President of the Franciscan National Marian Commission, and was the moving force behind the twelve volumes of *The Marian Era*, edited by the late Marion Habig, O.F.M., and published by the late Mark Hegener, O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1960-1979).

He is a member of the International Pontifical Marian Academy, and he has attended many of their meetings, held at four-year intervals, reaching out at the same time to the poor—for example, providing seventy new homes, the Villa Nazaret, in the Dominican Republic when the Marian Academy held an international congress in Santo Domingo, 1965. The winter and spring of 1971, during the first wave of post-conciliar turmoil, Fr. Alfred organized a country-wide series of lectures on our Lady, reaching into almost every state of the union, with Fr. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., then professor of theology at the Catholic University of America, Washington, as the speaker.

For the Marian Year just past, 1987-88, Fr. Alfred lit the spark that culminated in the five-day symposium at the University of San Francisco, June 17-21, 1988, "Mary, Woman for All Christians," the most successful such workshop (attendance over four hundred) the University ever mounted, with an international roster of speakers—Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Catholic—and with devotional and prayer sessions to match the scholarly presentations. Fr. Alfred is a member, as well, of the Ecumenical Society of the B.V.M., founded in England in 1967, and its American offshoot, begun in 1976. He took part in the Society's London-Oxford international conference on the eve of the international Mariological and Marian conferences at Saragossa, 1979.

A descriptive biblical cento might well be applied to Father Alfred Boeddeker, our honoree, as we confer the Cardinal Wright award: The Savior's advice to be "cunning as serpents, yet as harmless as doves" (Mt. 10:16) and his announcement that what has been "hidden from the clever will be revealed to children" (Lk. 10:21); the Apostle Paul's counsel, "Be tactful with those who are not Christians. . . .

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Talk to them agreeably and with a flavor of wit . . ." (Col. 4:5-6) and "Sort out all things, choose the good" (1 Thess. 5:21); and, finally, may there be realized for Fr. Alfred the statement from Isaias (65:20), "to die at the age of a hundred will be to die young."

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